



Boroondara Bicycle Users Group
Response to:

Monash Alliance M1 update plans
5 May 2008

Boroondara Bicycle Users Group (BBUG) – Contact:

- Julia Blunden: jblunden@bigpond.com
- Graeme Stone: graeme_stone@optusnet.com.au

Introduction

BBUG thanks the Monash Alliance (MA) for providing us with the opportunity to reply to the M1 update plans. BBUG will make this response available on its website. A copy will also be sent to Boroondara and Stonnington Councils.

We have considerable expertise in the cycling arena and we are available for further discussions or on site visits to discuss any of the following.

References

Presentations made at the community meetings by MA:

- Wednesday April 23 - Phoenix Park Community
- Monday April 28 - Malvern Town Hall.

Executive Summary

It is our understanding that Monash Alliance is expected to actively improve other areas of the local amenity, in return for any lost amenity lost, as a result of the M1 works.

This offsetting of amenity can be advantageous for local residents, businesses and councils alike and can also be simultaneously advantageous to the MA, ie. if done correctly this balancing act can be a win win for all.

Boroondara BUG would like to make a few suggestions that may well fit within this balancing act.

Stonnington Council

No doubt MA has held meetings with the Stonnington Council. One of the outcomes has been the agreement that water run off from the highway will be treated in some fashion and made available to the East Malvern Golf Course. Currently the golf course has pumping rights to pump water out of Gardiners Creek. Pumping is strictly controlled to maintain environmental flows and these changes will help drought protect the golf course.

Cycling – the new golf

While golfers are being catered for, cyclists in the vicinity of the golf course are not. From the perspective of local cyclists we believe it is necessary for Stonnington Council to also negotiate a better balance in trade offs for local cyclists and pedestrians. It is clear that transport and recreational benefits would result from improved local access to railway and other facilities in the valley.

Over the years there have been many attempts to close the gap in the Gardiners Creek shared path between the Solway St Bridge and Warrigal Road. Currently there is half a million dollars available to finance a solution. However the solution lies within the golf course and Stonnington Council has been somewhat hesitant on the matter.

Most of the suggested routes to bridge the gap fail to address the one major problem at the golf course: it's used as a shortcut from Thurso St to the Gardiners Creek Trail. In doing so cyclists and pedestrians risk being struck by golf balls and golfers have to take more care than what would reasonably be expected. Stonnington Council is not addressing this ongoing safety issue.

Our website page on the issue

http://www.boroondarabug.org/wiki/index.php/Gardiners_Creek_Trail

provides detailed information on this area and should be consulted together with this document.

On BBUG's website can also be found plans from the long lost Sinclair Knight Merz 2003 report, which shows cycling routes parallel to the M1.

http://www.boroondarabug.org/wiki/images/9/9a/GardinersCreekGap_Sinclair_Knight_Merz.pdf

Solway St Bridge to Thurso St

Regardless of the gap in the Gardiners Creek Trail, the changes to the M1 bring forth the real possibility of implementing a bicycle route from the existing East Malvern Station footbridge, near Solway St Bridge, to Golfers Drive and on to Thurso St / Argyll St parallel to and on the north side of the M1.

It appears the current sloping embankment is going to be replaced with a vertical retaining wall. This would allow enough space for a suitable path. Given the scale of the works at this point, the cost of implementing a cycle path as opposed to back filling a new retaining wall is neither here nor there.

Along this proposed path there already exists high cyclone style fencing utilized to stop golf balls landing on the freeway. The path could be in the space effectively not used by the golf club between these fences and the new M1 sound barriers. It would continue on the south side of the golf course car park.

As part of the M1 changes the East Malvern Station footbridge is to be realigned to allow for the new foundations and the like. In doing so it would be possible to alter the northerly access ramp, so it forks over the existing golfers' walkway between the golf green and the next tee and then ramps down on to this new cycling route.

The cycling route could terminate at "Golfers Drive" or more sensibly a wombat could be placed across "Golfers Drive" and the path extended to the west end of Thurso St, Argyll St or some part of Lomond Tce. A quick ride down Argyll St could lead to the Gardiners Creek Path (upper section) using a link such as the proposed new link under Warrigal Rd.

We would like to see this suggestion be given some serious thought by the M1 engineers and Stonnington Council.

Presentations made at the meetings held by MA

The meetings noted that it was proposed to remove the York St footbridge.

1. In return for the loss of this facility it was mooted that the footpath at Great Valley Road would be widened under the M1 and that ramp improvements would be made to the footbridge at Glen Iris station. This holds only a slight interest for cyclists as such but access for walkers would be improved.
2. It was also suggested that a path could be installed from Great Valley Rd all the way to the footbridge at Glen Iris Station on the west side of the M1. This would primarily make for a useful walking path for the local residents but could provide access to Glen Iris station for local commuter cyclists. However the latter would probably just use the nearby and parallel Wills St.
3. Finally it was suggested that the footpath at the Gardiners Creek footbridge near York St and up to and including Brixton Rise could be improved. This would be of great interest to cyclists as a continuous high quality path here would remove the necessity of crossing two footbridges to make use of the existing shared path on the east side of the creek.

We recognize that effectively relocating the shared path from the east bank to the west bank may not appeal to the local "friends of" group, who have invested a lot of time and energy in this area. However there is benefit for all the users of this area in doing so and replacement planting could be done to offset any removals.

The two creek footbridges represent major squeeze points resulting in ongoing cyclist-pedestrian

conflict. Changing the route would finally eliminate these two conflict points as cyclists would no longer need to cross them. The route on the east side of the creek is in need of some repair and could quite easily be pulled up and replaced with a gravel path providing a safer and larger walking circuit for local users. Boroondara Council may well want to contribute and/or encourage planting activities, etc by extending them to the east side of the creek, which could eventually produce a highly prized environment for the locals on both sides of the creek.

It is unclear how Brixton Rise was going to be altered to provide for a shared path but we are in favour of changes at this point (need more detail however). Walkers are badly catered for along this stretch. Also cyclists typically have to take to the road here and that is undesirable. The road is little used but that small use is predominately by large vehicles, such as trucks and the like. This can be a trap for those not used to the area. Cyclists and walkers alike have wanted this point upgraded for years.

Further suggestions

To replace the York St bridge would probably cost MA in the order of two to three million dollars – more likely the latter. We're not sure that the currently suggested offsets, for the loss of the bridge, are a fair swap. Noting that the works themselves will introduce their own damage that always needs to be cleaned up as matter of course. That would include paths and vegetation.

Other possibilities:

- On the south side of High St the Gardiners Creek Trail loops up from under the bridge steeply and then descends back down again further on by the Gazebo further to the south. How about flattening this section out by running it parallel to the creek? A check of the area indicates that a worthwhile improvement would definitely be possible. This would be very useful to cyclists and walkers alike – once again this represents a conflict point.
- The Gardiners Creek Trail where it meets the gravel path leading up to the York St footbridge – the footbridge: The Gardiners Creek Trail at this point could be realigned to reduce pedestrian/cyclist conflict at the bridge entry/exit point. Also possible.
- While the M1 works are underway, a temporary access path is to be installed replacing Elm Rd's functionality. When the works are completed, this access path should be replaced with a high quality path as part of the Gardiners Creek Trail. The dip in the path, approx 100 m SE along the path from Great Valley Rd, should be flattened out.
- Could the old York St Bridge or its ramps be reused to replace the Solway St Bridge? The latter is in desperate need of replacement and has been the centre of disputes in the area for some time, eg.

http://www.progressleader.com.au/article/2007/05/08/14226_ppv_news.html

The York St bridge span is however far too long. Can these spans/ramps be cut to size? We can suggest new locations for at least three pieces. Rather than being rejected out of hand, this

suggestion plus the logistics of moving the pieces should be looked at by a civil engineer. Re-using the bridge could save considerable expense to the two locals councils.

Lost opportunities?

- The Gardiners Creek Trail at Winton Rd, which is about to be upgraded by Boroondara Council, could probably be on the golf course. Once again eliminating two bridge crossings bridges, while simultaneously improving public safety. Probably too late for this one?
- The new section of path (roughly between Estella St and Saxby Rd) just replaced by Boroondara Council could have been located on the Stonnington side eliminating the need to cross two bridges, while simultaneously improving public safety. Likely too late for this one.

Background information

Background information on the Gardiners Creek Trail can be found here including Google Earth KML network links to a detailed map of the path.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gardiners_Creek_Trail

End note

M1 changes or not, path maintenance and/or replacement is Stonnington Council's responsibility. It should be noted that Boroondara Council is in the process of upgrading its sections of the Gardiners Creek path with high quality, concrete edged, 3m wide asphalt paths. They recognize that 500 to 700 cyclists use this path every day (refer VicRoads cyclist counter).

Boroondara Council also realize the path is a safety issue as noted by the coroner presiding over the recent death of a cyclist due to a poorly maintained path in Eltham:

http://www.leadernews.com.au/article/2008/04/16/33301_dvv_news.html

Furthermore it is now becoming clear that cycling is one part of the solution to congestion problems in Melbourne. The Eddington report makes the following points:

Eddington recommendation, page 80

"The EWLNA has noted the importance of ensuring that all new infrastructure projects in Melbourne accommodate walking and cycling access at the very early planning stages."

The report, page 81, specifically says that its recommendations:

"Provides much improved cycling connectivity around the central city addressing specific and longstanding gaps in the bicycle network"

It also states:

“Building a ‘cycling culture’ across Melbourne is hampered by a fragmented approach to cycling policy and infrastructure within government, with responsibility for cycling initiatives spread across several agencies. The EWLNA recommends that cycling be treated as a separate, distinct traffic category, with a coordinated, whole of government approach adopted to planning and financing cycling initiatives.”